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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000656

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER SIMANGO ATTACKED

REF: A. MAPUTO 609  
[1](#)B. MAPUTO 490

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Matthew Roth, Reasons 1.4(b+d)

[1](#)1. SUMMARY/ACTION REQUEST: (C) On June 9, assailants attempted to attack Daviz Simango, leader of opposition party Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), while he was campaigning in the northern port city of Nacala. Soon after, leader of Renamo opposition party Afonso Dhlakama, who happened to also be in Nacala, informed police that he had discovered an unidentified weapon at his residence. Four individuals associated with Renamo are suspected of having participated in the attack. The Embassy is proposing that a statement denouncing the violence and calling for all political parties to do the same (text below) be issued either from Washington or Maputo. This does not/not appear to be a PR stunt by MDM; rather, it tracks with our previously reported concerns about Simango's safety. It is not clear whether disaffected Renamo members or possibly elements of ruling party Frelimo are behind the attack, but neither scenario should be discarded yet. In any case, unofficial campaigning is just beginning for the October 28 election--more violence may be on the horizon. END SUMMARY/ACTION REQUEST.

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Assailants Attack MDM Leader  
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[1](#)2. (U) Emboffs have interviewed contacts in the police, political parties, press and academia, and have compared notes with information received by other international missions. The most likely scenario is as follows. On the afternoon of June 9, two cars pulled up at the Eucaliptos neighborhood of Nacala Porto in Nampula Province, where MDM leader Daviz Simango was greeting a group of supporters before a rally that was to take place soon. A group of men jumped out of the cars, and they attempted to grab an AK47 from the police escort that was protecting Simango. While the group of men tried to wrestle the weapon away from the police escort, a shot was accidentally fired, which hit Simango's car (he was not in the car at that moment). The police escort had managed to remove the cartridge from the AK47 during the tussle. The attackers then did succeed in pulling the weapon away from the police. By this time, Simango's staff had pushed him into his car and his driver was pulling away from the crowd. The attackers then attempted to shoot at Simango's car. It is not yet clear whether any additional shots were fired since the clip was no longer in the weapon. Attackers jumped into their two cars and sped away. In all, two MDM supporters and one policeman were injured in the fray, though none were hit by bullets.

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Weapon Discovered at Renamo Residence; 4 Individuals Suspected

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13. (SBU) Soon after, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, who was staying in a residence in Nacala Porto at the time, called police, and indicated that he had discovered an unidentified AK-47 on the grounds of his home. The police went to the residence and confirmed that the weapon was the one that had been grabbed from Simango's police escort. Some reports suggest that Dhlakama may have even handed over to the police four individuals that he believed had been involved in "illegal activity" (i.e. this attack). MDM contacts told Embossos they believe one of the attackers was a Renamo Member of Parliament, and they express concern that he won't be arrested since MPs ostensibly have immunity (although not/not if they are caught red-handed in a criminal act). Other sources suggest that at least two of the attackers may have been Renamo security staff/bodyguards.

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EU Statement; ACTION: USG Proposed Text  
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14. (U) The European Union has issued the following statement in response to the incident:

The heads of mission of the European Union member states in Mozambique condemn the attack on the leader of the MDM party that took place on June 9. It is crucial in any multiparty democracy that all political parties are able to campaign freely and safely. We urge all Mozambican party leaders to condemn political violence and to encourage their party

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members, supporters and citizens in general to allow other parties the space to campaign freely and safely.

15. (U) ACTION: We recommend that a similar statement be issued either from Washington, or be approved for issuance from the Embassy in Maputo:

The United States government denounces political violence in the strongest possible terms. The attack against the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) Party leader on June 9 is of great concern. Freedom to campaign, and to do so without fear of recrimination, is a basic right in any multi-party democracy. We urge leaders of political parties in Mozambique to publicly condemn such violence, and to make every effort to ensure that all parties are able to exercise this basic right.

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Comment: A Warning Message to MDM, but from Whom?  
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16. (C) Given that MDM supporters were injured and actual shots were fired in Simango's direction, we believe it is unlikely that this was an MDM PR stunt, and the incident confirms our concerns about Simango's safety (reftels). Simango told the Charge June 10 that he intended to resume his campaigning in northern Mozambique on June 15. Though some press reports are already calling this an assassination attempt, without more concrete information, we are not/not yet willing to do the same. However at a minimum it certainly appears to be an effort to intimidate Simango, and to warn him away from being too energetic in garnering support and votes. The question is from whom. Renamo elements appear to be involved, and it is possible that disgruntled party members feel that Simango and MDM are usurping Renamo's role as the leading opposition party. On the other hand, some of our contacts question whether Renamo supporters would be capable of coordinating a plan like this without outside support, and suggest a conspiracy, pointing to long-standing accusations that Renamo is infiltrated by Frelimo informers to suggest that the ruling party is actually behind the incident. Whatever the truth may be, MDM

does appear likely to benefit from increased press exposure and the increasing perception is that Renamo is truly a lost cause.

CHAPMAN  
RLANE